



## **A Canvassing Guide v.3**

**[www.yesequality.ie/canvass](http://www.yesequality.ie/canvass)**

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## Overarching Campaign Messaging

These are the current key reasons for voting yes from the campaign. There are more extensive messages available from the Campaign for anyone who wants further information.

- The referendum on **May 22** is about one thing only, extending **civil marriage equality** – giving equal rights to equal citizens
- As the Referendum Commission has confirmed, following the poll on May 22nd, **‘The Constitutional status of marriage will remain unchanged’**
- The difference between marriage and civil partnership is that, the Constitution protects the rights of married people, but not the rights of people in civil partnerships.
- Marriage is a secure foundation upon which society thrives. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Irish people are being asked to **share the freedom to marry** by voting Yes in the Marriage Equality Referendum.
- **This is a vote about real people and real families**, people that we know; our family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues.
- Irish people are fair minded, welcoming and confident. **Voting Yes will ensure that everyone in our families is protected by our Constitution.**
- **Voting Yes will take from no one.** Allowing lesbian and gay couples to marry will not affect any other marriage or family.
- While civil partnership has provided much needed recognition for lesbian and gay couples, it falls short of full constitutional equality. **Having a separate and lesser institution sends a clear message that lesbian and gay people are not equally valued.**
- This referendum relates to **civil marriage** in a registry office, not religious marriage. Churches cannot be forced to marry anyone and will not be affected in any way.
- A Yes vote strengthens marriage, protects everyone in all our families. **A Yes vote is a vote for family values.**

## Specimen ballot paper

An bhfuil tú ag toiliú leis an togra chun an Bunreacht a leasú atá sa Bhille thíosluaite?

Do you approve of the proposal to amend the Constitution contained in the undermentioned Bill?

An Bille um an gCeathrú Leasú is Tríocha ar an mBunreacht  
(Comhionannas Pósta), 2015

Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution  
(Marriage Equality) Bill 2015

Ná cuir marc **ach san aon chearnóg amháin**

Place a mark in **one square only**

**Má thoilíonn** tú, cuir X sa chearnóg seo .....

If you **approve**, mark X in this square .....

	<b>Tá</b> <b>Yes</b>
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**Mura dtoilíonn** tú, cuir X sa chearnóg seo .....

If you do **not approve**, mark X in this square.....

	<b>Níl</b> <b>No</b>
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## How to Canvass

### Canvassing works!

The reason politicians canvass is because it one of the most effective ways of engaging with people, hearing their issues and winning them over. It is hugely effective and once you have done it once you will look forward to doing it again.

### ...and it is enjoyable

The vast majority of people are friendly and genuinely appreciate you making the effort to call. Many will welcome the opportunity to chat and to have any questions answered. Some will seem busy or indifferent but they will take the leaflet and they will remember that you called.

### ...so how do I canvass?

#### **Tone matters**

Maintain a pleasant, friendly and engaging tone at all times. This referendum is about love and respect. The tone of our canvass must reflect those two things if we are to win.

#### **Welcome and encourage questions**

Canvassing is about listening as well as talking. Hearing what questions people are asking is invaluable for the campaign. When someone does ask a question respond in a positive and understanding way, being argumentative will not help you win people over. A question that goes unasked, goes unanswered and that turns into a doubt.

### A few don'ts

- Don't waste time arguing with solid No voters or chatting the night away with solid Yes voters. Keep going & find the people who need convincing.
- Don't be dismissive or aggressive. In order to assist the 'soft yes' voters to become certain yes voters, we must listen to and address their concerns.
- Reassure rather than react. "I can understand why you might be worried about that but the reality is..."
- Don't let one negative interaction get you down. – Stay positive and you'll meet so many nice people that you'll forget about the unpleasant ones.

### And some old school practical tips...

- Dress appropriately – comfortable smart casual clothes and flat shoes. This is Ireland it may rain!
- Don't make assumptions about someone not having a vote e.g. on grounds of age or ethnicity. Presume everyone you talk to has a vote, unless they tell you otherwise. If they are not registered and if the deadline hasn't passed give them a form to get on the register or direct them to the campaign website to print one off.

**Close the gate after you and don't take short cuts across people gardens.**

## What do I say?

### You're opening line should be:

"Hi, I'm campaigning for a Yes vote in the marriage equality referendum on May 22nd. Do you have any questions about the referendum?" (Answer any questions and then ask "**Are you leaning towards a Yes or a No?**") This allows canvassers to get a clearer picture of how the canvas has gone and can help to collate the information being fed back to HQ nightly.

### If you meet a **YES** voter...

Thank them for their support and emphasise how important it is that they come out to vote. Make them persuaders. "That's great, can I give you a leaflet and ask you to maybe use it to talk to your family and friends about how important it is to vote on 22nd May?"

If they're very enthusiastic ask them to get involved in the campaign and give them the local or national contact details. Give them a badge.

### If you meet a **NO** voter...

Politely thank them for their time and move on to the next door.

### If you meet a voter who seems **UNSURE** or **UNDECIDED**...

If someone seems unsure ask them if they have any questions on the referendum. Answer in a positive way and try to reassure them. If you don't know the answer to the question they asked don't wing it, just take a note of it and check with the campaign for an appropriate answer and get back to them. You can also direct them to the campaign website for more information. Thank them for their time and tell them you would appreciate their support.

## Common Questions

Here are some of the most common questions and some suggested responses, they are not intended to be a script and we would advise canvassers to rehearse their lines in their own language/words.

### Voter: 'I'm worried about the children/ what about gay people parenting children?'

Canvasser response:

- “Did you know that the ISPCC, Barnardos, Foroige, Irish Association of Social Workers and National Youth Council of Ireland are calling for a yes vote because they see marriage equality as a vote that will be good for our children’s future? These organisations are working everyday with and for children and they have all said a Yes vote is the best for our children”
- “Voting Yes or No won’t change whether gay people become parents or not. That’s a separate issue. Do you think the children of lesbian and gay people deserve protection – like all other children in married families in Ireland? Why punish them by voting no?”
- “I'm worried about some children too. Too many of our young gay people have had difficulties coming out because Ireland can be so unaccepting of them, as Mary McAleese pointed out, this referendum is about all our children being treated equally – straight or gay!”
- “Did you know that the children’s charity Barnardos and the ISPCC are campaigning for a YES vote? I feel that they know what they are doing and I’d trust them to speak out for the rights of children”

### Voter: 'I'm a bit concerned about two men as dads'

Canvasser response:

- “Whatever way you vote it won’t impact on the number of men parenting. There are many families headed by widowers and single men. The reality is gay people are parents too. Organisations who work with children and families, especially on issues like poverty, childcare, and welfare of children like ISPCC and Barnardos all support a Yes vote saying that families which provide love and security for children are the best places for our kids regardless of their gender or sexual orientation of their parents. Let’s think of the kids and Vote Yes for their security and protection. Voting no will have a negative impact on children with same-sex parents”
- “Fatherhood has changed over the years – my granddad/dad’s role as a parent is very different to mine/my sons – younger men are far more involved in parenting and we can see that men and women both make good parents”
- “Some children already have parents who are in same-sex relationships. A Yes vote will help those children to feel that their parents are equal citizens and their families are treated



equally in Ireland. Same sex families exist and will continue to exist after the referendum – a Yes vote will allow such parents to marry and feel the constitutional protection that all children in married families feel”

**Voter: ‘I’m worried about surrogacy’**

- “This referendum has nothing to do with surrogacy. However, surrogacy is a complex issue. The vast majority of those who engage in surrogacy are married heterosexual couples who wish to form families. At the moment surrogacy is not legal in Ireland. While the government plans to introduce legislation on this matter – it will be up to the government to restrict surrogacy in any way it chooses. All people whether married, gay or straight or single will have to abide by that law – the referendum is not about surrogacy in any way. Marriage in itself does not give a right to assisted human reproduction, especially surrogacy, and those who are raising surrogacy in this referendum are doing so as a red herring to take our attention away from the real issue – of Civil Marriage equality for all”

**Voter: Doesn’t every child deserve to have a mother and a father?**

- “Almost one quarter of children in Ireland live in diverse family shapes - there are widowed, divorced, separated and remarried families all over Ireland. There are also same sex and adoptive parents who have existed long before this referendum and they will be with us afterwards too. By voting no we will be punishing the children of same-sex parents, why would we want to do this? I think Irish people are fair and generous and know the importance of equality for all our children”
- “All of the services that deal with children say that a child needs love, security and stability to thrive – that’s what’s most important, not the gender of who gives them that love and stability. No child can be guaranteed that right – it’s just not that simple. There are families who are doing very well with a mother or a father or some with two mothers and two fathers. There have always been a variety of family forms in Ireland – families with adopted children, lone parents, married families and cohabiting parents. 30% of children born last year were not born into traditional married families. Some children already have lesbian or gay parents. Voting no won’t stop those families forming but it stops them getting the protection of the constitution that other married families have. These numbers are not insignificant and they are increasing. Those opposing marriage equality are trying to punish these children rather than encouraging their security and protection by allowing their parents marry”
- “If we are genuinely concerned about children, as Barnardos, ISPCC and Children’s Rights Alliance are, a yes vote will allow a group of children with same-sex parents have the constitutional protection which other children in married families have”
- “I’d like to think every child deserves a loving home, a variety of family forms provide this love. As Mary McAleese recently said, having gay parents is already a fact of life for many children, and those children deserve to be recognised by our constitution”

- “Many of us are familiar with the idea of a married mum and dad, but there are plenty of other family types – in my own family (give example – separated parents, lone parents, re-married and they are doing a good job parenting – its love and security that matters to our children)”
- “Every child does have a father and a mother. Voting Yes or No will not affect that in any way. Lesbian and gay people will continue to have children irrespective of the outcome of the referendum. A Yes vote will mean that their children will go to school on May 25<sup>th</sup> knowing that they and their family are fully equal to their friends’ and classmates”

**Voter: ‘Is this referendum an opportunity to vote on whether same-sex couples will be able to adopt?’**

- “No this referendum is nothing to do with adoption”
- “Adoption is a right of a child to a family not a right of an adult to a child. Lesbian and gay people have always been able to apply to be considered as adoptive parents. More recently same-sex couples and cohabiting couples can now also apply to be considered. In fact, did you know that lesbian and gay people both couples and individuals have been fostering hundreds of children all over Ireland for the HSE? This will continue to be the case regardless of the result of the referendum. A no vote will not stop this practice, a Yes vote will support those families who wish to be married – providing constitutional protection for those families and enhanced security for all the children involved”
- “The Children and Family Relationships Act has provided for legal clarity for many family types in Ireland – this will remain law whether people vote Yes or No to the referendum. It deals with areas such as adoption, and guardianship”
- “The Adoption Authority of Ireland are the only people who make decisions about placing children for adoption – these decisions are always made in the best interests of the child”

**Voter: ‘Why a referendum now on this issue, is it not all a bit rushed?’**

“This referendum is a people’s referendum – called for and now to be voted on by the people of Ireland. Actually civil marriage equality has been in discussion in Ireland since decriminalisation of homosexuality back in 1993 –in the last decade civil marriage has become available in more than 17 other countries and states Irish people have joined in the campaign to ensure equality for relationship recognition. The current programme for government included the Constitutional Convention with its discussion on marriage equality which took place in 2013. The people in that body voted by 79% that the Government should have a referendum to ask the people to include the right to marry for same-sex couples in the Constitution. This is a right which should not be further delayed, for the couples and the children involved, equality is so important”

**Voter: ‘What’s the difference between Civil Partnership and Marriage?’**

- “Civil Partnership is not the same as marriage. It is a separate and unequal institution. It provides no constitutional protection for lesbian and gay people. It does not have the same status or meaning as marriage”

- “Civil Partnership has many differences to marriage – There is no access for civil partners to judicial separation. – There is a different vocabulary used to describe those in civil partners, they are not husband or wife. Foreign marriages are not recognised here in Ireland. - There are no safeguards available to civil partners such as those available to married couples i.e. solicitors in separation and divorce cases are asked to ensure that there has been irreconcilable breakdown, not so in Civil partnership breakdown”
- “Without the protection of the Constitution a future government could legislate Civil Partnership away or eat away at the rights connected to it”
- “Civil partnership does not have the same social status as marriage, indeed even in next of kin and social situations, people are unsure what it means – everyone understands marriage”
- The fact is opposite-sex partners can get married, same-sex couples cannot. Start a conversation asking a voter who expresses this view if they are married and if they are, ask would you swap your marriage for a Civil Partnership? (helps voter to understand we just want equality)
- “You know I’d really like to see my brother/me my son being able to get married like their brothers and sisters, it’s awful that gay and lesbian people’s relationships are treated as inferior to those of their brothers and sisters”

**Voter: ‘The referendum will undermine my marriage/marriage is our word?’**

- The independent Referendum Commission has said clearly that the referendum does not re-define marriage.
- Tell me what does marriage mean to you personally? Do you think everyone should have the opportunity to have what you have been privileged to have?
- Being able to share the freedom to marry will make so many lesbian and gay couples feel truly included in Irish society.
- The idea of marriage has changed a lot down the generations. In earliest times it was about money and property – these days it’s about love. Up until the 1970’s married women had to leave their jobs in the Civil Service, things are very different now. My children/brother/sisters marry for love, wouldn’t it be great to allow me/lesbian and gay people to share in the protection and recognition that marriage brings?
- I can’t think of any concrete ways in which allowing same-sex couples to marry takes away from marriage. In fact, doesn’t it mean marriage itself will be strengthened by more people entering it?

**Voter: 'Why are we changing the Constitution?'**

- “We are not changing what’s there – we are adding to it. We are being asked to amend the constitution to insert a sentence ‘Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex’. If passed this will allow same-sex couples to share the freedom to marry. Our nation was founded on ideals of equality and inclusion, and our Constitution should protect all citizens equally”.

**Voter: 'Should there be a conscience clause for religious people to opt out of conducting civil marriages if it's against their religious beliefs?'**

- “There is no need for a conscience clause. Firstly, no church will have to marry same-sex couples if they do not wish to. Secondly, state registrars have never sought to be allowed to refuse to marry a same-sex couple – as state employees they understand that they must comply with the law on civil marriage as they do on all laws”
- “When divorce was introduced in Ireland, the Catholic Church was not forced to remarry divorced couples, the same will apply if a Yes majority speaks in the referendum poll”
- “Yes vote will make sure that people who want civil marriage can get married. Churches will have religious ceremonies and civil ceremonies will be held in registry offices or other approved places. Legally. It’s up to each church to decide whether they want to bless same-sex marriages”

**Voter: 'Will churches be forced to marry gay and lesbian couples?'**

- “This referendum is only about civil marriage, not church marriages”
- “Churches will still be free to make their own decisions regarding who they marry”

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Voting Information**

**Polling Cards:** Will be issued to every person registered to vote. The card will provide details of where to vote. Ideally polling cards, along with photo ID should be to the polling station.

**Polling date:** The referendum takes place on Friday May 22th 2015.

**Polling Station times:** Polling will take place between 7am and 10 pm.

**Who can vote?:** You must be an Irish citizen who is 18 years or over on polling day and ordinarily resident at the address at which you want to register.

Eligible voters who are not on the register and wish to vote can apply for inclusion on the supplementary application form, which is available from City, County or City and County Councils. Check on-line at [www.checktheregister.ie](http://www.checktheregister.ie). Completed forms must be received by your registration authority by Tuesday, 5 May 2015.

**Can I apply for a postal vote?** Postal Voting applications ended in April.

### **What is the wording of the proposed amendment?**

“Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex.”

## Looking After Yourself While Canvassing

While canvassing can be very rewarding it can also be very challenging, especially when it is very personal.

While most people you encounter are very positive, polite and friendly, you may encounter a small number of people who are not and you might need some back-up support and guidance to deal with this.

You should be aware that help is available and how to help yourself. Here are some useful tips:

- Don't go home after a canvass without talking to someone else on the canvass about how you got on.
- It is important that you find a way to 'detox' after a canvass. In other words, download your thoughts on the day and don't carry them to sleep time.
- It would be useful to have a 'canvass buddy' with whom you can confide in, should the need arise. Both parties should feel that they can rely on the other.
- The strength of having an identified 'buddy' is that the other party identifies with the issues but handle them differently. They may even be able to provide an alternative view on whatever is bothering the other.
- It would be best to find your own buddy, make an arrangement to check-in with each other after a canvass either through phone or face-to-face.

### **Useful relaxation resources**

It's a good idea to 'emotionally ground' yourself if you're feeling the need.

- A helpful youtube video about basic stress management can be found here:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOsN8QlgQWU> (search for: 'Stress Reduction: How to Reduce Stress & Anxiety' on Youtube)
- Mindfulness exercises help to ground a person also but take a little practice. Some of these are found free here:  
<http://www.tarabrach.com/audioarchives-guided-meditations.html>
- Listening to inspirational music or looking at such material can lift your mood. An example:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzYWZzvP5LI> (Search Youtube: Big Gay Rainbow Electorate - Marriage Equality Debate in NZ - New Zealand - Maurice Williamson)

### **Further Support**

These helplines are here to help, use them if you need to.

National LGBT Helpline:	1890 929539 / <a href="http://www.lgbt.ie">www.lgbt.ie</a>
Samaritans:	116 123
Aware:	1890 303 202
HSE LGBT Mental Health Website	<a href="http://www.lgbtmentalhealth.ie">www.lgbtmentalhealth.ie</a>

## Remember....

### **Canvassing is Not for Everyone**

Remember, canvassing is not for everyone. If you feel that you are not able to continue, **STOP**. There is strength in seeking help if you need to. It is not a sign of weakness.

There are other ways to support the campaign (fundraising, leaflet drops etc) if you find that canvassing is not for you.

## **Finally...**

You will love canvassing. This is history so get out there and make this happen.

For more information check out [www.yesequality.ie](http://www.yesequality.ie) or call us at 01 703 0412